

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TAGS: PINT, PINS, ECON, PFOR, OE, CO
SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. THE HEAD OF THE DEA OFFICE IN BOGOTA WAS KILLED DECEMBER 13. AT THE CLOSING OF THE 1976 SESSION OF THE CONGRESS, PRESIDENT LOPEZ PROMISED THE NATION CORRUPT OFFICIALS WOULD BE PUNISHED. PROMOTIONS IN THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY MAY LEAD TO THE RETIREMENT OF GENERAL JOSE MATAALLANA. SECURITY PROBLEMS CONTINUED IN BOGOTA. FORMER LABOR MINISTER DE CROVO WAS APPOINTED AMBASSADOR TO MEXICO. THE ANAPO PARTY HAS CHANGED LEADERS. THE GOC ANNOUNCED THAT IT EXPECTS A YEAR-END TREASURY SURPLUS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS. PERUVIAN PRESIDENT BERMUDEZ PAID A BRIEF VISIT TO COLOMBIA. END SUMMARY.

2. DEA CHIEF GONZALEZ MURDERED. DEA-BOGOTA SPECIAL AGENT-IN-CHARGE OCTATIO GONZALEZ WAS SHOT AND KILLED DECEMBER 13. HIS ASSAILANT, THOMAS C. COLE, WAS AN INFORMANT FOR DEA IN THE UNITED STATES. THE FATAL SHOOTING TOOK PLACE IN
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DEA BOGOTA OFFICES ON THE 19TH FLOOR OF A COMMERCIAL BUILDING JUST TWO BLOCKS FROM THE CHANCERY. COLE APPARENTLY COMMITTED SUICIDE WITH HIS OWN REVOLVER AS COLOMBIAN POLICE, SUMMONED BY US MARINE SECURITY GUARDS, ARRIVED ON THE SCENE. CONTRARY TO PRESS REPORTS ORIGINATING IN BOGOTA, NEITHER US MARINES NOR GOC POLICE EXCHANGED GUNFIRE WITH COLE. REPORTS THAT

COLE WAS BLUDGEONED TO DEATH ARE EQUALLY WITHOUT FOUNDATION. AT THE TIME OF THE INCIDENT, SAIC GONZALEZ WAS THE SOLE DEA AGENT PRESENT IN THE OFFICE AND HE WAS UNARMED. THREE DEA SECRETARIES ALSO PRESENT WERE NOT HARMED AND WERE ABLE TO SUMMON ASSISTANCE. DEA AND THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE ARE COOPERATING IN A CONTINUING INVESTIGATION OF THIS TRAGIC INCIDENT (BOGOTA 12374).

3. PRESIDENT LOPEZ CLOSES 1976 SESSION OF CONGRESS. PRESIDENT LOPEZ CLOSED THE 150-DAY SESSION OF THE CONGRESS DECEMBER 16. HE EXPRESSED GRAVE CONCERN ABOUT THE "MAGNITUDE OF THE MORAL DECOMPOSITION" IN COLOMBIAN SOCIETY AND PROMISED THAT OFFICIALS FOUND GUILTY OF ENGAGING IN CONTRABAND OR OTHER CORRUPT ACTIVITIES WOULD BE PUNISHED. SPECIFICALLY HE ASSURED THE COLOMBIAN PUBLIC THAT OFFICIALS CONVICTED OF ACCEPTING BRIBES FROM MULTINATIONALS (READ LOCKHEED) WOULD "BE SHOWN NO LENIENCY". (THE RESULT OF THE GOC INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED LOCKHEED BRIBERY ACTIVITIES IN COLOMBIA ARE EXPECTED TO BE REVEALED SHORTLY). LOPEZ PRAISED THE CONGRESS FOR PASSING HIS PROPOSAL TO CONVENE A CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY IN 1978 TO REORGANIZE THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND THE DEPARTMENTS (BOGOTA A-107). THE PROPOSAL MUST BE APPROVED AGAIN NEXT YEAR IN ORDER TO TAKE EFFECT. HE ALSO LAUDED THE CONGRESS FOR PASSING A LAW APPROVING THE COLOMBIANIZATION OF FOREIGN BANKS (BOGOTA 6118), FOR RATIFYING THE MARITIME TREATY WITH PANAMA (BOGOTA 11733), AND FOR GRANTING THE GOC EXTRAORDINARY POWERS TO REORGANIZE BY EXECUTIVE DECREE THE CIVIL AERONAUTICS AND THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEMS. HE INDICATED THE CONGRESS WOULD BE CALLED INTO EXTRA SESSION PROBABLY EARLY NEXT YEAR TO CONSIDER LEGISLATION ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ELECTRICITY FUND AND AN OMBUDSMAN SYSTEM FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

4. CHANGES IN THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY. MAJOR GENERAL JAIME SARMIENTO BECAME A FULL GENERAL THIS WEEK, THUS PAVING THE WAY FOR HIS PROBABLE APPOINTMENT AS COMMANDER OF THE ARMY, REPLACING GENERAL LUIS CARLOS CAMACHO LEYVA. CAMACHO IS EXPECTED TO BE NAMED ARMED FORCES COMMANDER, THE NUMBER TWO POST IN THE DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT. IF SARMIENTO'S EXPECTED APPOINTMENT TAKES PLACE, IT WILL MEAN THAT THE CONTROVERSIAL ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF THE JOINT STAFF GENERAL JOSE MATA LLANA WILL HAVE BEEN PASSED OVER AND THUS MAY RETIRE (BOGOTA 11017).

5. SECURITY FORCES ON THE ALERT. THE COLOMBIAN POLICE AND MILITARY WERE IN A STATE OF ALERT THIS WEEK BECAUSE OF REPORTS THAT URBAN GUERRILLAS PLANNED A WAVE OF TERRORISM IN BOGOTA. THE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE WAS TAKEN FOLLOWING THE MURDER OF TWO POLICEMEN ALLEGEDLY BY EXTREME LEFTISTS DECEMBER 10 IN SOUTHERN BOGOTA. LATE DECEMBER 16 A NUMBER OF SMALL INCENDIARY

DEVICES WERE DISCOVERED IN A SEARS STORE BEFORE THEY CAUSED ANY DAMAGE. ONE OF THREE SUSPECTED PERPETRATORS WAS CAPTURED.

6. FORMER MINISTER OF LABOR DE CROVO NAMED AMBASSADOR TO MEXICO. MARIA ELENA DE CROVO, WHOSE RESIGNATION EARLIER THIS YEAR AS MINISTER OF LABOR WAS PROMPTED BY A KNOTTY STRIFE BY DOCTORS OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY INSTITUTE (BOGOTA 10370) WAS OFFICIALLY NAMED THIS WEEK AS AMBASSADOR TO MEXICO. HER APPOINTMENT HAD BEEN RUMORED FOR SOME TIME. REPORTEDLY, SHE IS THE FIRST WOMAN IN COLOMBIAN HISTORY TO OCCUPY A PERMANENT AMBASSADORSHIP.

7. ANAPO CHANGES LEADERS. THE NATIONAL POPULAR ALLIANCE (ANAPO) WHICH ALMOST WON THE 1970 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND HAS SINCE BEEN IN A STATE OF DISMAY AND DECAY MADE AN ATTEMPT DECEMBER 12 TO FIND NEW LIFE. THE PARTY EFFECTIVELY DISOWNED FORMER LEADER MARIA EUGENIA ROJAS DE MORENO (THE DAUGHTER OF DECEASED GENERAL ROJAS WHO RULED THE COUNTRY DURING THE 1950'S) REPLACING HER WITH FORMER CONGRESSMAN JOSE JARAMILLO GIRALDO. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE NEW LEADER PLEDGED TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ALLIANCE WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY FOR THE 1978 ELECTIONS.

8. GOVERNMENT BUDGET SURPLUS. THE GOVERNMENT IS EXPECTING TO END THE YEAR WITH THE FIRST TREASURY SURPLUS IN YEARS. IF SO, IT SHOULD FAVORABLY AFFECT ATTITUDES TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT AND IMPROVE INFLATIONARY EXPECTATIONS. IN SPITE OF THE POSSIBLE SURPLUS AND THE TIGHT MONEY POLICIES THAT HAVE BEEN APPLIED ALL YEAR LONG HOWEVER, THE MONEY SUPPLY IS TAKING ITS TRADITIONAL YEAR END SPREE. MONETARY EXPANSION WAS AN INFLATIONARY 6 PERCENT IN NOVEMBER AND COULD BE EQUALLY RAPID IN DECEMBER DUE TO A NUMBER OF YEAR AND FACTORS.

9. PERUVIAN PRESIDENT MAKES BRIEF STOP IN BOGOTA. PRESIDENT BERMUDEZ OF PERU VISITED BRIEFLY WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ DECEMBER

10. THE TWO PRESIDENTS AGREED TO HOLD A MEETING NEXT JANUARY 20 TO DISCUSS AMAZON BORDER ISSUES (BOGOTA 12321). DREXLER

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